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ABSTRACT

This book examines three major school-reform movements in the United States that were shaped by outside societal forces and identifies their common characteristics. The first two chapters examine the history and influence of the progressive movement and chapter 3 is devoted to progressive education's chief philosopher and pragmatist, John Dewey. The fourth chapter describes the influence of the civil rights movement on the second major educational reform movement, the equity reform movement. The push for community control over the schools and parental involvement, fostered by civil rights groups, is discussed in chapter 5. Chapter 6 describes how the 1983 report "A Nation at Risk" triggered the move toward privatization and the excellence-reform movement, which was based on economic concerns about competing successfully in the global marketplace. The seventh chapter examines the school culture wars, which have divided educators into three general groups--western traditionalists, Afrocentrists, and multiculturalists. The final chapter offers several conclusions: (1) these reform movements resulted from outside societal pressures; (2) the progressive reform movement set the stage for the educational reform movements that followed; (3) both progressive and equity reformers shared a romantic concept of the poor; (4) progressive reform and equity reform were dominated by political liberals and radicals, whereas excellence reform tended to be championed by political conservatives; (5) U.S. presidents became more involved in establishing a national educational agenda; (6) all three movements gave rise to a new breed of reformer--the scholar/activist; (7) the focus on innovation spawned new ideas but also contributed to faddism; (8) educational change became increasingly based on scholarship; and (9) current educational reform in America lacks clear vision. (Contains 190 references.) (LMI)